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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Coordination Francaise du Lobby Europeen des Femmes, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20329 (E) 191218

Please recycle

Statement

In the 2016 European Parliament report on poverty, it was noted that there were 64.6 million poor women in Europe compared with 57.6 million men. France, which is justifiably considered to have a well-developed system of social protection and public services, is no exception to that imbalance or its consequences. As elsewhere in Europe, the impediments to women's access to social protection, public services and various types of gender infrastructure are exacerbated by poverty and precarious living conditions: 4.7 million poor women (accounting for 52 per cent of the poor population of France) are relegated to a state of indigence and are socially marginalized. Among them, the following categories are particularly vulnerable: heads of single-parent families, young women, rural women, older women, migrant women, and women from the overseas territories. These categories are particularly affected by displacement and social exclusion. This poverty is not a temporary or marginal phenomenon. It is a structural phenomenon which is becoming increasingly severe in France.

Legal measures and existing incentives to address, for example, pay differentials (from 9 per cent to 24 per cent) at all levels of employment are not put into effect, or are applied only in a limited fashion; the glass ceiling persists year after year; guidance, training and recruitment of women to more varied and more lucrative occupations is not on the agenda; unpaid work (care of children, the sick, and ageing or disabled parents) is not reflected in women's incomes; 72 per cent of household tasks are performed by women on a voluntary basis or under duress; there is no real reciprocity in carrying out these social responsibilities. For women, there is too much involuntary part-time employment, low-level work, temporary work, seasonal employment, unpaid work, unemployment (the unemployment rate for single mothers is 15 per cent compared to an average of 9.6 per cent for all mothers). Women are in the majority among recipients of revenu de solidarite active (RSA) (welfare benefits). In short, the labour market and working conditions are very unfavourable to women.

The austerity policies carried out for many years in France and in Europe have an impact on women. The reduction of public spending threatens social gains and women's work, as they constitute the majority of public sector workers. This is a double penalty, despite half a century of struggle.

Women are still disadvantaged in their career paths because of family responsibilities and the uncertainties of social life (widowhood, illness, divorce, unemployment ... They are victims of male violence, and lack paid and steady employment (departures from the workforce to raise children). Because they pass through periods of insecurity, women have less or inferior access to sexual and reproductive rights (contraception, abortion or assisted reproduction).

They are often solely responsible for their children's education. Unwanted pregnancies, sole parenthood and disability are aggravating factors of impoverishment. The public services for infants are insufficient (not enough nurseries; no access to personal aides). Not to mention women who engage in prostitution in order to support their families. A single-parent family comprises a sole parent with one or more unmarried children: in metropolitan France, 83 per cent of single parents are women, and the figure is 90 per cent in the overseas territories. They often forego care for financial reasons.

They are penalized at retirement: two out of three retired poor are women. The end-of-life conditions of poor single women are deteriorating in France and is a source of increasing concern.

All public services are gradually disintegrating, thereby impairing the enjoyment of rights and citizenship. There is a need to bridge the digital divide of which poor (and older) women are the primary victims.

All these factors are cumulative. They are compounded for overseas and migrant women. From the point of view of migrant women, France is in violation of the international treaties which it has signed (violence, prostitution, exclusion, ghettoization, sexism, racism, extreme poverty ... are the daily lot of migrant women).

On the basis of the United Nations conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, and in order to combat structural impoverishment and the marginalization of a large number of women, which exclude them from public services, social protection and the gender equality infrastructure, the Coordination Française du Lobby Européen des Femmes calls upon States:

- To develop a society of equal responsibility of men and women both at work and within the family.
- To budget for the costs of the design, implementation and gender monitoring of public policies (gender-sensitive budgeting).
- To continue to advocate the production of gender-disaggregated statistics.
- To fund free university research on all these topics.
- To ensure the implementation of affirmative action policies to promote training and education for girls.
- To implement and strengthen existing legislation on the labour market (parity and equal pay)
- To ensure parity, equal pay and recruitment for women with disabilities.
- To address the specific challenges of these women.
- To combat job insecurity, as well as involuntary part-time and unpaid employment of women.
- To upgrade the status of the "caring" professions.
- To enhance women's awareness of the risks of reductions in their pensions after interrupted or incomplete service (paying attention to informal work)
- To expand public services for infants.
- To promote non-transferable parental leave and guarantee the return to work.
- To reduce the digital divide that is contributing to the isolation of many women.
- To establish gender-sensitive policies and procedures on asylum and integration to help women and girls gain access to human rights and autonomy, particularly in the areas of security, health, education, social welfare, justice, etc).
- To ensure equality and continuity of public services and social protection between metropolitan France and the overseas territories.

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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Regards de femmes, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

18-20330 (E) 211218 211218

Please recycle

Statement

[Original: French]

For twenty years, the non-governmental organization Regards de femmes has been working in France and around the world to ensure that every woman and every girl can enjoy safety, equality, recognition and respect for her dignity, in public and private spaces and in urban and rural areas alike. These areas of autonomy and freedom must enable women to study, to obtain health care and access to justice, and to work, and thrive, with men and with other women.

Regards de femmes seeks to ensure that every woman and every girl has a legal identity — the most basic human right — and that every woman, regardless of her marital status, is able to register her children's birth.

In order for women and girls to fully exercise all their rights, it is essential for their names to be recorded in the civil registry at all stages of their life, and in particular at birth and marriage.

For real equality of rights, duties and dignity to be achieved between men and women, including women with disabilities, Regards de femmes and its partners rely on the international conventions that States have signed and under which they are accountable to their peoples:

- Article 3 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights stipulates that the States Parties undertake to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the Covenant.
- The articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on economic and social rights, in particular article 10 on education, article 11 on the elimination of discrimination in the field of employment, article 13 on the elimination of discrimination in other areas of economic and social life, and article 14 to ensure women's participation in rural development and its benefits.

Regards de femmes advocates with

- State and local authorities for the provision of public services
- Companies, to show the economic and social advantages of drawing up a comparative report on women's situations
- "Auxiliary family workers", in particular farmers' wives and daughters, to share best practices so that their work is recognized and they receive compensation.

Advocacy with State and local authorities

Social protection has provided support and leverage for the economic empowerment of women even where their rights stemmed from their status as wives or mothers. We are now asking for those rights to be individualized, including in the area of tax.

Today's recessionary policies are resulting in cuts to public services and social benefits.

Women disproportionately suffer the effects of this, which jeopardizes social gains:

- The threat of setbacks to acquired rights and/or a stoppage of the work still to be done before existing formal rights can actually be exercised

- Social spending helps to offset the economic and social inequalities between women and men. Any decrease in such spending strongly affects women, who make up the overwhelming majority of low-wage earners.

Compared to women and girls living in urban areas, those living in rural areas have neither the same access to, nor the same supply of, public services. Their children too suffer from a dearth of services. In a given rural area, women and girls are worse off than men and boys.

Sources of employment, health services, public transport, schools, from kindergarten to university, cultural and sports centres are distinctly fewer; where facilities do exist, they are very hard to access.

Rural girls have less access to sexual and reproductive health services. Even in areas where the Pass contraception voucher programme has been implemented, they are less likely to obtain or make use of the vouchers.

The assistance provided by community organizations is very sparse in rural areas.

For some ten years, Regards de femmes has been committed to the extension of the Act on Parity in the Political Sphere to rural communes. The association organizes meetings to encourage rural women to be candidates in local elections and, if elected, to train them to fulfil their mandate and exchange best practices.

Women's involvement in local political life helps to ensure the implementation of public programmes for the empowerment of women and girls through access to sustainable infrastructure at the level of the commune or a group of communes: extended school hours to allow students to stay before and after the official schoolday, childcare facilities for children outside school periods, intercommunal nurseries, provision of collective transport to take students to schools, and subsidies for salaried workers' to cover transport between home and the workplace.

Public authorities must establish, for their individual offices, a comparative report giving a rundown of their activities and an assessment of their policy on occupational parity between women and men. This report should also indicate the nature of the community's or group's policies to promote equality between women and men.

In the specifications they draw up, local authorities must include the gender equality rule and present a comparative activity report on the award and execution of public contracts.

Advocacy with companies

There is a clear social responsibility incumbent on businesses, whether family or multinational, public or private. To reduce gender inequality, businesses should comply with the following standards:

Adopt greater transparency on compensation policy;

Eliminate any wage gap between men and women engaged in the same activities and equally qualified;

Ensure that both women and men can enrol in training programmes;

Give public recognition to women employees;

- Put a stop to communications that discriminate against women.

- Have a Board of Directors whose membership is at least 30 per cent female and encourage men to participate in committees, councils and observatories working on equality policies (HeForShe).
- Respect occupational parity requirements; implement an action plan to eliminate pay gaps and differences in career development for women and men. In many European countries, access to public procurement requires evidence of job desegregation.
- To allow men and women to share housework equally, family constraints need to be eased, for women and men alike: through flexible hours, parental leave, and intercompany nurseries and day-care centres.

Regards de femmes organizes workshops to sensitize companies to the importance of adapting working conditions as set out above, to inculcate best practices and to encourage companies to find new ones. And indeed, entrepreneurs, both women and men, are undertaking to change companies' ways vis-à-vis their partners (employees, shareholders, suppliers, customers) and society as a whole (environment, land, consumers, public health).

The non-governmental organization organizes international meetings to share information on local actions in various countries, in order to enhance women's visibility, collective voice and representation in small and medium-sized enterprises as well as on family farms.

Women make up nearly half of the world's farm workers. However, not only are they unpaid family workers, for the most part, but persistent patriarchal traditions in many countries have meant they cannot own or inherit land, so that they do not have access to loans or the necessary training to be able to increase their production. These difficulties can be compounded by the lack of a legal identity.

Our Côte d'Ivoire partner, Organisation Nationale pour l'Enfant, la Femme et la Famille, is the model for the provision of support for rural women and their empowerment. Its actions have contributed to the promotion, defence, respect and protection of women's rights, capacity-building for women in the technical, material and financial spheres, and an increase in their income.

The notable progress achieved — and available for dissemination to our other partners in developing countries — has included access to land and the means of production, inheritance, and participation in decision-making bodies in the villages.

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Statement submitted by Femmes Solidaires, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20332 (E) 211218 211218

Please recycle

Statement

[Original: French]

Femmes solidaires is a secular, feminist popular education movement. Our network of 10,000 women working in 190 branches and committees throughout France experience very different life situations. Women and girls benefit from social protection throughout their lives: in education, employment (or seeking employment), housing, health care, pensions, family support and emergency response. It is financed through taxes and contributions.

The social protection system, developed after the Second World War to provide assistance to the poorest, in a spirit of citizen solidarity, is now being questioned by one element of the political class, which sees it as too expensive and ineffective.

The major problem in France is still that of real access to these services, due to a territorial inequality that we find in all branches of social protection: services are increasingly concentrated around large cities, effectively excluding rural and disadvantaged women.

1. Education

Schooling in France is free and compulsory from the ages of 6 to 16 years, but for the great majority it begins at 3 years of age, when children enter nursery school. While the last two governments made a commitment to provide access to nursery school from the age of 2 years, real access to these services is highly unequal: on average, 11.5 per cent of children under 3 have access to nursery school, but that rate falls to 2.8 per cent in the Department of Seine-Saint-Denis. That is not insignificant, as 30 per cent of all inhabitants of Seine-Saint-Denis live below the poverty line. Day-care facilities are expensive and inaccessible for single mothers, rural women and those looking for work; this tends to perpetuate their precarious situation.

Access to schooling beyond kindergarten remains a major problem for children with disabilities and Roma children. In 2016, fifty per cent of children with disabilities attended regular schools. At the same time, fifty per cent of Roma children are unable to attend school. For girls, after primary school, the discrepancy is getting worse: 90 per cent of teenage Roma girls in France are not in school.

2. Housing

In France, 38 per cent of homeless persons are women. At the most conservative estimate, at least one in every three homeless women is a victim of street violence. Access to basic hygiene (showers, sanitary products) remains difficult for homeless women, and they cannot get off the street without access to housing. Affordable accommodation can be provided nationwide through social housing. In 2017, Emmanuelle Cosse, the Minister of Housing, and Laurence Rossignol, the Minister of Women's Rights, co-signed a circular on priority status for women victims of violence, as soon as the filing of a complaint has been recorded, in access to social housing.

There is still much regional inequality in the availability of emergency shelters for women victims of violence. The "115" national emergency shelter network is always overwhelmed: 57 per cent of calls go unanswered, and in 80 per cent of cases "115" can only offer a single night's accommodation. Women victims of violence, with their child(ren), also end up on the street. In fact, emergency accommodation for women victims of violence is provided through local networks: in greater Ajaccio,

Corsica, 30 to 50 women victims of violence each year receive support from the Fédération Association Laïque Éducation Permanente alone.

3. Health

On 19 October 2018, a decision was made to close the maternity clinic at Le Blanc, Indre, so the Châteauroux maternity clinic is now the only one in the whole department. Women will have to travel 60 kilometres to give birth: as a result, those who are single, disadvantaged or in need of urgent care will be denied access to a hospital. Many maternity clinics are closing in rural or semi-rural areas, such as Eure, the Valenciennes region and Picardy.

While our social protection system provides coverage for everyone, access to the health care system in France depends greatly on one's place of residence. In the departments of Ain, Jura, Yonne, Eure, Nièvre, Mayenne and Creuse there is not a single gynaecologist.

4. Pension scheme

The pension scheme is funded by contributions deducted from the wages of working people. The pension calculation is based on the amount of the wages: the lower the person's wages, the lower their pension will be. Women are disproportionately affected by that formula: 62 per cent of disadvantaged women have experienced long-term unemployment, and 30 per cent of women work part-time. The wages of farm women or those working in a family business are underreported or not reported at all. Upon retirement, single and disadvantaged women experience a precipitous drop in their standard of living: 75 per cent of those persons receiving the lowest pensions are women (2013 figures). In 2018, 66 per cent of persons aged 53 to 69 years having neither a job nor a pension are women.

5. Outlook

The need for social protection in France must be reaffirmed and defended. Homeless, rural, single or disadvantaged women who need government assistance are still too often excluded from the social protection system. Poverty and isolation spur populism and permanently impair the health and quality of life of the women affected. According to the principle of equal rights for all citizens, women's rights must apply equally nationwide.

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Statement submitted by La Manif Pour Tous, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

18-20334 (E) 211218 211218

Please recycle

Statement

[Original: French]

Women and girls the world over are the principal victims of a thriving business: the reproductive industry. These companies, agencies and networks take in billions of dollars every year by confiscating women's reproductive freedom, hiring them under surrogacy contracts.

These companies, agencies or networks promise legally drawn up, "ethical" contracts, supposedly very different from those offered by mafia-like networks in some countries. In reality, any surrogacy contract, regardless of the circumstances and conditions, constitutes exploitation of women for the benefit of others.

As it considers women mere breeders of children, surrogacy can never be "altruistic": its very principle is intrinsically sexist.

Women who are used as surrogate mothers are bound to life-long contracts, covering their most intimate relations as well as their life in society. The terms of such contracts are always skewed and to the disadvantage of the surrogate mother, since they are designed for the benefit of the agencies' clients. The (very common) problems that arise are invariably resolved for the benefit of those who pay, namely the agency's clients.

Surrogacy contracts are in violation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

They also violate the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Trafficking in Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The women involved do not know their rights, receive no advice and must deal with the demands of clients and agencies entirely on their own; accordingly, they are wholly at the mercy of companies that tempt them with large sums of money but hide the extreme risks they are taking, for example by being surrogate mothers several times over. The companies also conceal the totally subservient position women unwittingly place themselves in by signing the contract. Once it has been signed and the pregnancy begun, surrogate mothers are at the mercy of the clients' demands. There is no going back.

All women who voluntarily hire themselves out under surrogacy contracts are vulnerable, whether because of their economic or educational status or from a familial or psychological standpoint. They are the defenceless victims of unscrupulous groups that are solely concerned with large profits — made, at women's expense, by biologists, doctors, salesmen, clinics, and others.

Kelly, an American surrogate mother, bore witness to this exploitation in the documentary #BigFertility produced by the Center for Bioethics and Culture. She was gulled by the false promises of the agencies she contacted, all of which offered her surrogacy contracts they claimed were "ethical" and in no way exploitative.

But all of her surrogacy experiences were disastrous for herself, her family and her finances. She was taken advantage of by an array of decision-makers, who reaped substantial profits thanks to her and in the process robbed her of her most intimate freedom, that of childbearing: having been on the verge of death during a surrogate pregnancy, she is no longer able to bear children of her own.

Kelly is one of the surrogate mothers who have fallen victim to the fertility market. There are, unfortunately, thousands more around the world who tell the same

story: victims of exploiters, mired in surrogacy contracts that are always to their disadvantage, with no one to warn, defend or shield them.

Given this situation, which worsens day by day, Member States must guarantee women access to social protection services so that they are alert to the danger and can avoid being exploited as brood stock.

It is up to governments to take over from the many associations that have been working for years on the ground to protect women from surrogacy contracts. Only governments can build on and consolidate the work already done: by enhancing women's social protection, guaranteeing access to a public service open to all citizens, and doing whatever it takes to ensure that precarity, ignorance or despair do not drive women to hire out their wombs to the highest bidder.

Member states know how to unite to protect their citizens against the greed of large corporations. The reproductive industry is one of the greatest dangers in the path of women, and especially girls, the future prey of networks that hypocritically masquerade as "ethical" undertakings.

It would be a fond illusion to hope that the goals of Agenda 2030 can be achieved while such activities are allowed to flourish and tens of thousands of women and girls are left by the wayside. Member States need to take a firm stand against surrogacy contracts of whatever kind, even allegedly "ethical" ones. Sustainable development will not be possible otherwise.

A coordinated worldwide ban on all forms of surrogacy would ensure that development meets the needs of the present without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations, in a resilient world where everyone has their place.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved while ignoring all these women who are now being exploited or may be in the future.

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Statement submitted by Asia Pacific Women's Watch (APWW), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20326 (E) 191218

Please recycle

Statement

Asia Pacific Women's Watch is a regional network representing voices from across the five sub-regions of Asia and the Pacific. We welcome the priority theme for the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

A number of International Instruments commit to it, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, yet it remains a fact that in most countries these have not been realised universally. Most marginalised and vulnerable sections of women continue to be deprived of these.

Social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure are at the heart of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Without scaling up investments in this area, virtually all of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals — be they social, economic, environmental or political — will remain out of reach. Social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure play a critical role in "transforming our world". As such, their provision must be geared to changing unequal gender relations to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Social Protection and security must be viewed through the women's rights perspective. Gender responsive social protection should not be perceived only about women in labour markets, it has to be about women at home, in farms and forests and fields where women are. There is need for social security discourse to be redefines to look at the strategic and practical needs of women especially from the socially and economically vulnerable groups.

Gender justice for all women and girls is a core human right, and indispensable for gender equality, development, poverty reduction and is crucial to achieving human progress. While social protection measures do not explicitly aim to achieve gender equality, women have always been targeted as beneficiaries of social protection programmes, either individually or as female heads of households. Current social protection systems are displaying a growing disparity within populations of women. We are witnessing a growing invisibility of gender equality across all levels of society where women are forced into adversarial judicial systems where power and control are clearly discerned. The ongoing negative effects of colonisation on indigenous women and girls and the intersectionality of discriminations against women compound rather than diminish outcomes. The continuous exposure of indigenous women and ethnic minority women and women with disabilities to intersecting forms of discrimination is evident across access to all public services. Intersecting forms of discrimination fuelled by race, gender, class, caste, ability stereotypes remain a key issue within the Asia and Pacific Region.

With the sustainable development goals being economically focused States are looking to labour laws and codes that affect organized workers. The unorganized sector, e.g. home-based workers fall through the gaps. Gendered power relations in health systems are severely impacting universal health cover and services, despite this being a key target area under the Sustainable development goals.

In situations of natural disaster or conflict sound social protection systems for women have diminished, are precarious or completely lacking in times of forced migration, wars and famine with disastrous consequences. As the world continues to experience incremental yet unpredictable climate change, the inter-linkages with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) is an emerging issue that needs to be addressed in the context of sustainable development. The interlinkages between sexual and reproductive health and climate change are complex and indirect, and yet

there is a resurgence of population discourse that attempts to make simplistic connections between climate change and population growth.

Climate change, has drastic implications on delta and low-lying coastal communities and many island nations. The ability of women to live on their land is rapidly diminishing. Survival, let alone empowerment and sustainable development are threatened.

Violence against women and girls remains a key priority for the Region. Women remain highly vulnerable to various and intersecting forms of violence and exploitation and remain highly exposed due to ethnicity, age, race, class, caste, marital status, sexual orientation and (dis)ability.

Among the first attacks on women's bodies and their lives by populist states include the erosion of women's reproductive rights and facilitation of cuts in social services. We are witnessing increased legislation that reduces accountability for the perpetration of domestic violence and the rape of women and girls. We also note that some states are developing policies and changing their development aid programmes to prohibit women's access to education and services that promote their health and wellbeing. These developments are backward steps with respect to compliance with Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the sustainable development goals.

Societies across the region are being subjected to religious extremism and "fundamentalisms", women face increasing incidences of violence when diversity is not tolerated. 'Honour killing' and 'Sorcery killing' in most instances goes unreported, murders are perpetrated within the context of shame, property disputes and inheritance rights of women. Female genital mutilation in the name of religion and culture remains a key challenge. Some governments resort to manipulating the right to cultural and religious diversity as a pretext for violating human rights, including the rights guaranteed to women and girls, HIV survivors, and persons with diverse sexual orientations. Homosexuality is criminalized or treated as a punishable offence in a number of countries.

Asia Pacific Women's Watch urge States to make concrete actions to:

- Recognise, implement and report on gender sensitive social protection measures must take into account not only women's needs, time and energy constraints, but also aim to make social and economic structures more equitable in order to give women more power.
- To review, analyse and re-strategize all efforts on how to respond to ending all forms of violence against women in all situations.
- Protect women's rights and interests. Ensure sufficient basic medical services for women and pay particular attention to the health needs of rural women, women in poverty, women with disabilities, migrant women, middle-aged and senior women and women of ethnic minorities.
- Strive for women's development in tandem with social and economic progress. Governments should take into account of national realities and the special needs of women when they make development strategies, so that women enjoy equal share of the fruits of development.
- To strengthen political will and invest and allocate funds for women's and girl's access to health and education and participation in political and public life.
- To maintain accountability and transparency in state reconstruction by including women's needs and priorities, women's human rights including their sexual and

reproductive health and rights, access to justice, and representation and participation in peace processes.

- To ensure the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions on women peace and security and to recognise the needs and priorities of women in conflict and post conflict must be comprehensively addressed.
- Urges governments and aid agencies in disaster and emergency situations, to ensure provision of gender responsive relief strategies and strong preventative measures to bring services to women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health and work to eliminate violence against women. Longer term measures are essential to mobilize women and girls and enable confidence and ability to make choices for their health and sexual and reproductive rights and violence prevention.
- To provide confidential and secure domestic and sexual violence interventions that meet the needs of a diversity of women, who are currently underserved by existing services. This includes the provision of specialist services where these are required. Safe houses/women's refuges, especially for women who require higher support such as disabled women that include levels of clinical care, than provided in the usual refuge situation.
- To strengthen health policies and decrees related to VAW/gender-based violence are fundamental in initiating and sustaining health sector responses, are holistic and integrated and include; community level awareness raising programmes done in a rights-based, gender-sensitive and culturally sensitive manner, integration of gender-based violence into the medical curricula, provide sexual and reproductive health and rights education in schools as a means of primary prevention.
- For stronger political will to institutionalise a systemic gender-based violence prevention response into routine sexual and reproductive health care, models need to use rights-based and gender sensitive approach and include monitoring and formal evaluations. This needs to be achieved in a sustainable way in order to reach the diversity of women, while effective project-based interventions need to be sustained.

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Statement submitted by DESSI International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Social Protection through Applique Arts & Crafts Entrepreneurship for Gender Equality and Rural Women Empowerment in Pakistan

The situation of rural women in Pakistan is most vulnerable because of it is typically based on the patriarchal society and tribal system. This is most likely male-dominated society where rural women are treated like sub-humans and most of them are confined in the walls of houses. They don't have even right to get education or contribute in income generation activities for the household. In the society, it is considered that educated girls or income generated by women do not keep honour of the family, but they involve in the vulgar activities which cause defaming family; so they are kept in the homes. In the family, boys are given priority over girls. Not just this, they are also married in early ages and are expected to procreate children and up-bring them. In most of the cases, women and girls are not consented by parents while making decisions about their marriage and education. The violence and discrimination with women will be found in most areas of Pakistan. They are subject to all kinds of violence in terms of physical, mental, sexual or structural means.

Deficiencies in Pakistani rural women which needs to overcome are: Lack of technical, vocational, soft and life skills; Lack of training and participation opportunities; Lack of financial and marketing linkages/access; Inadequate systems and techniques to support rural women micro enterprises; Lack of awareness and poor implementation of government initiatives; Lack of capacity building, advocacy and strong community-based institutions; and Lack of monitoring, proper feedback mechanism and its quality follow-up.

Rural women in Pakistan are deprived and marginalized and their conditions are rather appalling as they are living in the worst conditions by socially, economically and politically. The female literacy and participation in economic activities is very low. Since they live in a traditional tribal society structure, they are bound not to go out for economic activities. However, a lot of them are semi-skilled and they stitch cloths semi-finished and do some embroidery at their homes. Rural women artisans are making applique rilli work, needlework and other hand-made items which they preferably use for personal or family use. But there is huge demand of handmade applique rilli items and hand embroidered items locally and nationally as well as globally. For which they can be supported with latest technology, research, advocacy and provision of Technical and Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) related capacity building initiatives. If they would produce quality in-demand items then they can surely earn huge amount for their dignified livelihood through establishing self-help enterprises directly from their own homes.

Rural women need to be supported in further enhancing their skills especially in terms of making their quality hand-made products more marketable and also linking them with proper marketing strategies so their income earning options can be increased. Their skills can be more finished and their golden hands can more be polished with motivation, Technical and vocational, education and training and other skills. Presently, Applique arts & crafts are the part of new fashion industry trends and making bed covers only have now been changed in the women wear and home decorations globally. Therefore, demand of hand-made items has recently been increased and its supply has been decreased accordingly. If we focus on creating more quality rural women artisans then we have to make their proper capacity building and provide them with technical knowledge and international market trends up-to-date information. So that they can properly plan, make and produce relevant market demanded items.

Technical & Vocational, Education & Training (TVET) and skill development definitely increase abilities to innovate and adopt new market trends and advanced technologies for recognition of skilled rural women. There is huge gap in the needed skills and available resources. If Pakistan wants to reach global market then it has to produce quality supplies which are in-demand so that long-term income generation source can be streamlined for the poverty eradication and respectable image of women artisans. For the women entrepreneurship, producing applique arts & crafts items is the ideal category for which they can be easily permitted as well as can adopt instantly in the short span of time without any problems.

Hence, this statement has been in black by the DESSI International to reach women's voices at global level so that some potential income generation activities and projects of capacity building can be implemented at gross-roots level to eradicate poverty from the rural communities of Pakistan. Through such activities, women's capacity building can be achieved through imparting Technical & Vocational, Education & Training, soft and life skills as well as it can create social and financial entrepreneur's society with idea of self-employment in living with dignity for long-term sustainability solutions.

Rural women entrepreneurship in applique arts & crafts will create a privileged resourceful communities in Pakistan which can further make social changes like: Entrepreneurship promotion; Skills development and skills Enhancement; Market understanding and linkage/access; Reach at local, national and international markets; Skills and psycho-social outcomes; Business creation, business survival, degree of formalization; Sustainable income generation source; Enhanced Earnings; Promotion of handmade cultural items; and Creating a soft, technical and respectable image of Pakistan.

Promotion of rural women entrepreneurship in applique arts & crafts and hand-made items is also the solution to reduce rural migration and rural women's disrespect in societies. Government of Pakistan and international communities have initiated many free skill development initiatives but in spite of these, Pakistan has been considered among industrially undeveloped country. These local and international free Technical and vocational, education and training and advocacy initiatives must have focus on raising awareness among rural women semi-skilled artisans and provide them platform and advocacy to promote their social and economic entrepreneurship in producing quality applique arts & crafts and hand-made items. So that they can easily earn their dignified livelihood as well as create respectable recognition globally.

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Statement submitted by Institut Jules-Destrée, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Millennia2025 MAD-Skills: "Master, Apply and Dynamize your skills" to learn, transmit and work: women's empowerment through innovation

The sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to be held at the United Nations in New York in March 2019, will focus on the theme of sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, drawing upon the conclusions of the Commission's sixtieth session regarding women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development.

We underscore our solidarity with the Commission's sixtieth session in 2016 and will carry forward the recommendations briefly summarized in the report of that session, which expresses "grave concern about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation."

We confirm, in line with the Commission's sixtieth session, that women must have full and equal rights to men in terms of (1) participation in decision-making; (2) access to education and learning throughout their lives; (3) economic independence for the establishment of their businesses; and (4) benefiting from access strategies to public services, credit, professional training, technology, markets, sustainable energy at an affordable price, transport and trade. We confirm the need (5) to encourage all such access and inclusive education for all women, particularly the most disadvantaged; (6) to promote processes to develop and facilitate the availability of appropriate knowledge and technologies globally; and (7) to ensure women's effective participation in peace processes and mediation efforts, conflict prevention and resolution, as well as in peacekeeping (Economic and Social Council, Official Records, 2016, Commission on the Status of Women, report on the sixtieth session (20 March 2015 and 14–24 March 2016). Most of these recommendations were made in the "Millennia2025 Action Plan for women's empowerment and gender equality", prepared with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris in December 2012.

We also endorse the recommendations of the Commission's sixty-first session in 2017, which charted a clear path towards women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work, with a view to managing technological and digital change for women's economic empowerment. The recommendations advocate for women's access to skills development and decent work in new and emerging fields and seek to enhance women's participation as users, content creators, employees, entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders in these fields. Measures were also recommended to allow women to "leverage science and technology for entrepreneurship and economic empowerment in the changing world of work." (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Commission on the Status of Women 2017, "Agreed conclusions", p.3).

We are therefore working, in conjunction with the Millennia2025 Women and Innovation Foundation, to strengthen women's empowerment through innovation, including through the concrete initiative of MAD-Skills: "Master, Apply and Dynamize your skills" to learn, transmit and work. MAD-Skills builds tools while encouraging diversity and the intergenerational, multicultural transmission of skills. Daring to create, innovate and undertake: MAD-Skills proposes to assist its members by enhancing their skills online. A number of tools will help to promote their businesses and activities. The concept of "mad skills" brings a multidimensional expertise to boost skills and talents in order to address current and emerging

challenges, including women's empowerment, full access to their rights and ways of strengthening their economic leadership (www.mad-skills.eu).

Millennia2025 MAD-Skills seeks to provide its members with the necessary secure digital tools, at a cost that is affordable for vulnerable persons, to follow up on the concrete initiative of Millennia2025 Solidarity-Women. Specific support will be offered to women and girls whose learning has been hampered by their life circumstances but who nevertheless utilize their skills in their specific fields to build their own futures. Each beneficiary of MAD-Skills tools will be invited to share one of their skills in order to mobilize the network and strengthen the Millennia2025 intelligence platform for women's empowerment, equality and innovation.

Added value of Millennia2025 MAD-Skills

1. Millennia2025 MAD-Skills offers an innovative solution through the very concept of integrating each individual into digital tool models, allowing them to present, structure and enhance their skills, talents and activities.

2. Millennia2025 MAD-Skills is an innovative concept, based on experience and innovation. The aim is to sustain this concept through a team of young people and an online structure based on the transmission and increase of skills.

3. Education is the principal objective of Millennia2025 MAD-Skills and is addressed in the 608-page book written by Marie-Anne Delahaut, entitled "Together for equality!", which presents foresight methodology, international networks and concrete initiatives for women's empowerment and gender equality from 2007 to 2025. The book has a foreword by Ms. Irina Bokova, former Director-General of UNESCO, and was published by the Millennia2025 Foundation and the Institut Jules-Destrée.

4. Millennia2025 MAD-Skills and the book "Together for equality!" are educational tools aimed at teachers and students. Their areas of focus include:

- Replicable foresight methodology and its application at the global level for women's empowerment and equality
- The experiences and analyses of members of Millennia2025 in a number of countries across several continents with regard to the situation of women and girls
- Creative feminism inspired by several authors and the work of international associations
- The constructive power of networks in raising awareness, solidarity, action and changes in attitude
- The knowledge base, structured using keywords since 2008
- The applications of Millennia2025, the WeObservatory for Women and eHealth
- Access to the knowledge society through quality online tools for "Master, Apply and Dynamize skills" in order to learn, teach and work
- Language training, as the texts presented in French in the book are in English on the portal.

MAD-Skills is proactive with regard to information and communications technology and its future developments. All technology can be useful and aligned with the objectives of its members, in the context of the Commission's session. We want to implement these guidelines for all actors at the international and multilingual levels. The main goal is to empower women and girls, but we are all aware of the

importance of this issue as a key to harmony for humanity, with the will to address the global challenge of sustainable development together.

There has been a steady increase in mobilization for women's empowerment and equal rights among civil society, social partners and political leaders. Since 2014, the concrete initiatives resulting from the Millennia2025 action plan, presented by the information and gender equality society hub of the Institut Jules-Destrée in coordination with the Millennia2025 Women and Innovation Foundation, have been focused on solutions to help women in vulnerable situations escape poverty through innovation with Millennia2025 Solidarity-Women; on combating violence against women pursuant to the Istanbul Convention; and on economic leadership as a major key for women's empowerment, alongside education, equality and justice, with Millennia2025 She4Innovation working in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

Millennia2025 MAD-Skills, a new concrete initiative nominated for the World Summit on the Information Society Prizes 2018, is being led by Marie-Anne Delahaut, Director of Research at the Institut Jules-Destrée, President of the Millennia2025 Women and Innovation Foundation and founder, network administrator and web designer of mad-skills.eu.

Building a network of information and communications technology tools to enhance the talents and skills of women and girls around the world is our goal, in line with the Commission's session. Aiming for equality together will make us stronger!

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Statement submitted by Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

"The Coalition against Trafficking in Women — a non-governmental organization working to end the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls as a vital part of realizing gender equality — urges the Commission on the Status of Women to address the trafficking of women and girls by encouraging governments to implement social protection systems and empower women and girls through sustainable development.

The majority of human trafficking victims are women and girls. While some are trafficked for the purposes of forced labour as domestic servants, in factories or in agricultural fields, most are exploited within the sex trade, particularly in prostitution. Human traffickers' prey on the most vulnerable and marginalized: women and girls who are young, mostly of colour and from the Global South, poor, homeless, of low socio-economic class or caste, who have already suffered sexual abuse and violence, often at a young age, and who lack choices and alternatives to survive. Victims' vulnerabilities compound traffickers' abilities to coerce, entice and deceive women and girls into sexual exploitation and forced labour to satisfy the demand for, respectively, prostitution and cheap or free labour for untold profits. Women and girls trafficked into the commercial sex trade suffer extreme violence and discrimination at the hands of traffickers and other exploiters, including sex buyers, while those trafficked for labour servitude are equally vulnerable to sexual violence and sexual exploitation. Comprehensive social protection systems, including social services that address gender-based violence, are essential in ensuring the protection of women and girls from human trafficking.

The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Trafficking in Persons Protocol) calls for the creation of crucial social protections systems both in the prevention of human trafficking and the protection and care of its victims. Article 6 establishes that Member States must implement measures that "provide for the physical, psychological and social recovery of victims of trafficking in persons," especially services that include appropriate housing, medical and psychological care, material assistance, education and jobs training, and legal rights counselling. Providing victims of trafficking with frontline services allows trafficked and exploited individuals the opportunities they need to rebuild their lives and helps prevent their re-victimization. Article 9 presses Member States to create or strengthen measures to alleviate the factors that make people, in particular women and children, vulnerable to trafficking. A strong social protection system focused on eradicating poverty and giving access to education and equal opportunities is key to alleviating women and girls' vulnerabilities to trafficking.

To sustain our planet, protect the fundamental rights of every human being, and ensure that no one is left behind, Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1). Each of the Agenda's 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets is "integrated, indivisible and balances the economic, social and environmental" dimensions of sustainable development. Each is distinct in its framework but equally important. Three targets — 5.2, 8.7, and 16.2 — address specific forms of trafficking in persons. Other targets focus on the root causes of vulnerability that ultimately contribute to the spread of human trafficking and call for the creation of social services to prevent these vulnerabilities.

Sustainable Development Goal five on gender equality and its target 5.2 on violence against women, in particular, recognizes that the trafficking of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation is an issue of gender-based discrimination and violence. As part of comprehensive efforts to end human trafficking and achieve

sustainable development. Member States must implement national laws and policies addressing trafficking for sexual exploitation that fully reflect the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and be particularly observant of Article 3's definition of human trafficking. These measures should recognize the distinct dimensions of sex trafficking and its disproportionate impact on women and girls.

Furthermore, the clear relationship between sex trafficking and its end goal, the sex trade, including prostitution and pornography, must be acknowledged. The Trafficking in Persons Protocol and Article 6 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women specifically mandate Member States to combat the exploitation of the prostitution of others. Under Article 9.5 of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, governments have an obligation to strengthen legislative or other measures to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation leading to trafficking as part of its efforts to combat these human rights violations. This includes policies that will curtail demand for prostitution, which fuels the sex trade and consequently sex trafficking.

The sex trade is a cause and consequence of gender-based violence and discrimination. Women and girls are constantly seen as disposable commodities in society, and the sex trade, in particular, perpetuates this degrading stereotype. Viewing commercial sexual exploitation as a legitimate form of work hinders efforts to close global gender gaps in employment, including pay equity and discrimination. It also reinforces attitudes and practices that perpetuate sexual harassment, a persistent and pervasive obstacle for women in achieving economic independence. The harms the sex trade inflicts upon women and girls are in direct violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and it can never be a source of empowerment or legitimate employment for any woman.

Instead of normalizing the sex trade and allowing the commodification of women and girls, governments must adopt and adequately fund programs aimed at providing women and girls necessary social services, access to education, and dignified employment opportunities. This is reflected in additional Sustainable Development Goal targets under Goal 5, like that focused on valuing domestic and unpaid labour, as well as targets under other Goals, including Goal 1 on poverty eradication, Goal 4 on quality education, and Goal 8 on decent work.

If gender equality is to be achieved, the United Nations and its agencies, governments, and civil society must take action to prevent and eradicate all forms of violence and exploitation of all women and girls, including human trafficking. We urge them to create or strengthen social protection systems and implement a sustainable development plan that empowers women and girls by:

- Creating policies that address and seek to eradicate violence and discrimination against women and girls, including sexual violence.

Developing social and economic structures to combat harmful cultural practices that foster gender-based violence and discrimination and can lead to trafficking in women and girls.

- Eliminating economic practices and discriminatory policies, including poverty and discrimination based on race, national origin, ethnicity or religion, that render women and girls vulnerable to trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.
- Implementing national educational curricula that promote gender equality, emphasizing the harms of gender stereotypes, sexual exploitation, sexual violence and the objectification of women and girls.

- Developing and implementing safe migration programs and providing support to migrant populations, especially women and girls.
- Promoting the adoption of policies that encourage transparent business practices, clean supply chains, and fair wages and working conditions for all employees.
- Ensuring equal and free access to education and the establishment of literacy programs for all women and girls.
- Adequately funding programs aimed at preventing violence against women and providing services to survivors.
- Adequately funding support services for victims and survivors of international and domestic trafficking and sexual exploitation, including exit programs with financial assistance, education and job training, employment opportunities, housing, medical care, legal advocacy, residency permits and language training.
- Promoting effective laws against trafficking, prostitution and related forms of sexual exploitation, including provisions based on gender equality penalizing the demand for prostitution (sex buyers) while solely decriminalizing women bought and sold in the sex trade.
- Rejecting government policies promoting prostitution, whether through legalization or decriminalization of the sex trade, in violation of international law.
- Rejecting the misleading term "sex work," which normalizes the abuse and exploitation of prostitution and attempts to redefine the sex trade as a viable employer for impoverished and marginalized women.
- Calling on all Member States to ratify and implement the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

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Statement submitted by Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

One year before the twenty-fifth anniversary review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia sees a significant opportunity to take stock of the extent to which social protection systems, public services and investments in sustainable infrastructure are contributing to the achievement of gender equality and sustainable development, to identify persistent gaps and new challenges and to develop future recommendations.

Social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Without greater investment in that regard, practically all 17 Sustainable Development Goals – be they social, economic, environmental or political – will remain well out of reach.

In addition to being increased, investment should be directed towards transforming unequal gender relations to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Goal 5).

In the light of this transformative potential, Dones per la Llibertat i Democràcia considers it necessary to pursue the following:

- Explore synergies among social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure to achieve gender equality, taking into account the productive and reproductive roles of women
- Discuss contextual factors that shape the need for and affect the design of social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure, giving due consideration to restrictions (e.g. time and income), barriers (e.g. to asset ownership and labour markets) and risks (e.g. violence and discrimination)
- Examine social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure to distinguish the specific design and implementation characteristics that either support or impede the realization of women's human rights
- Identify the principles of gender-sensitive design, financing and implementation across public policy areas (social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure) and sectors (education, health, childcare and care for older persons, transport, energy, water and sanitation, etc.)
- Develop action-oriented recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and support the implementation of global commitments addressing gender issues, including in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1).

These issues are based on the priority themes of previous sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, including the sixty-first session on women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work and the sixty-second session on challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls. Special attention should be given to the multiple and intersecting inequalities that can hamper the ability of women and girls to access social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure or limit their ability to benefit from related investments. One area of analysis will be expanding social protection to women in the informal sector, in both rural and urban areas, and adapting public services and infrastructure to their needs.

The right to social security is enshrined in the United Nations legal instruments establishing the rights of population groups, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the International Convention on the

Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires States Parties to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure their equal enjoyment of the right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave (article 11 (e)).

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action recognizes the important role of social protection, public services and infrastructure in the eradication of poverty and the advancement of women and girls more broadly. In the critical area of concern, women and poverty, Member States committed to create social security systems wherever they do not exist, or review them with a view to placing women and men on an equal footing, at every stage of their lives. The critical role of infrastructure was recognized in the areas of women and the economy, and women and the environment, in which Member States were called upon to provide public infrastructure to ensure equal market access for women and men entrepreneurs and to support equal access for women to housing infrastructure, safe water and sustainable and affordable energy technologies, such as wind, solar, biomass and other renewable sources.

These and other issues have also been considered by the Commission on the Status of Women under the various priority themes of recent years. For example, the agreed conclusions of the fifty-third session in 2009 established a clear link between unpaid care work and areas considered under the priority theme calling for the development of adequate social protection schemes, investment in quality, accessible and affordable public services and greater access to infrastructure to reduce the burden of care. In recent years, including during its sixty-first session in 2017, the Commission has reiterated the need to recognize, reduce and redistribute the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work done by women, including through the provision of infrastructure, technology and public services, such as water and sanitation, renewable energy and information and communications technology, as well as accessible, affordable and quality childcare and care services. During its sixty-first session, the Commission also established the link between the productive activities of women and the advancement of women in paid employment, stressing the need for gender-responsive rural development strategies and urban planning and infrastructure, including sustainable, safe, accessible and affordable public transport systems, street lighting, and separate and adequate sanitation facilities, so as to facilitate women's access to places, products, services and economic opportunities. During its sixty-second session, the Commission reiterated the need for investment in gender-responsive social protection, public services, infrastructure and technology with a particular focus on women and girls in rural areas.

The fundamental importance of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is affirmed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, both as a goal in itself and a key component for the success of the 2030 Agenda as a whole. Social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure are integral to the 2030 Agenda and essential to achieving gender equality and sustainable development through the 17 Goals: Goal 5 explicitly recognizes the importance of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, specifically with regard to unpaid care and domestic work in target 5.4; Goal 1 stresses the urgent need to implement social protection systems and measures for all; Goal 9 is a commitment to developing quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all; and Goal 10 calls for the adoption of fiscal, wage and social protection policies to progressively achieve greater equality.

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Statement submitted by National Women's Council of Catalonia – Consell Nacional de Dones de Catalunya, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

The situation of women in Catalonia in terms of social protection systems, access to public services, sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has historically been closely linked with the administrative structure of Catalonia, as the guarantor of public welfare. This protective structure is associated with the successful development of a solid legal framework and public policies backed by guarantees, which has ensured general protection and public services over many years.

This structure, which underpins social protection systems and the sustainability infrastructure, has been severely affected by the economic crisis that we have suffered and by the cuts made by various governments.. This, among other factors, has shown clearly that part of the system requires a different approach and that one of its shortcomings is undoubtedly the weakness of the system of equality.

The systems are currently being overhauled, which could give rise to time lags and risks relating to political and economic processes. The achievement of the sustainability agenda of Catalonia is obviously linked to the global agenda, which should bring to light the main challenges in Catalonia relating to protection systems and sustainability. In this regard, one of the main challenges is the final approval of the national plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia, based on the report of the advisory council for sustainable development "The 2030 Agenda: transform Catalonia, improve the world, where equality is a cross-cutting theme". It should be noted that Catalonia has Act No. 17/2015 of 21 July on effective equality between men and women, for which there has been inadequate implementation to confront the main challenges faced by women.

The situation in Catalonia

In 2017, the Catalan Government set up a gender equality observatory, an advisory body attached to the Catalan Institute of Women, as one of the measures to ensure compliance with the Act and to achieve effective equality between women and men. Through data produced or collected by the gender equality observatory, we should be able to find a framework to discuss social protection:

The employment rate of women is 48.7 per cent, 10 points less than that of men. In Catalonia, 44.2 per cent of registered unemployed persons are men and 55.8 per cent are women. The annual gross salary that most clearly displays the disparity between women and men corresponds to the over-55 age group, with a difference of €10,417 per annum. The lower the age, the lower the wage gap between women and men, although it remains very significant. There is notable vulnerability among young women, who have an average annual gross salary of €9,657.

With regard to access to education, women are in the majority at all levels of university education, representing 56.6 per cent of students. The difference with men is even greater in terms of marks, at 14.8 percentage points.

Women with registered disabilities represent 7.3 per cent of the population, a very similar proportion to men across almost the whole territory, but are subject to considerable discrimination in receiving adequate services and benefits.

The limited impact of article 56 of Act No. 17/2015 is highly significant; it calls for systematic inclusion of a gender variable in all statistics, surveys and data collection, which is crucial to the establishment of corrective measures or active policies. One example is the 2016 report on the state of social services in Catalonia, which does not contain gender-disaggregated data. This obviously complicates the achievement of a comprehensive perspective on access to basic social services.

At the same time, the report "Indicadors socials a Catalunya" (INSOCAT),a compilation of social indicators in Catalonia in relation to the national and European context issued by Entitats Catalanes d'Acció Social (ECAS), a federation of Catalonian social assistance organizations, in July 2018, shows that the level of poverty among unemployed persons increased in the period 2013–2017 because the amount of unemployment benefits and allowances decreased and/or because there are more unemployed persons who do not have access to social or unemployment benefits; four out of 10 unemployed persons do not receive any benefits. Naturally this affects families, especially women. It should be noted that in 2017, 87 per cent of contracts registered in Catalonia were temporary: 87.3 per cent in the case of women and 86.9 per cent, in that of men.

Older women have low pensions and face situations of dependency and loneliness – 77 per cent of older persons living alone are women – due to the failure of a social protection system based on contributions from paid work. They reach the final stage of life depending on the income of others, and if they are widowed, they are part of the most vulnerable segment of our society. According to the National Institute for Social Security, in 2016, for example, 471,645 men and 372,050 women received pensions in Catalonia.

In 2017, 87 per cent of contracts registered in Catalonia were temporary: 87.3 per cent in the case of women and 86.9 per cent, in that of men.

Proposals

Based on the above, and the determination to progress towards genuine and effective equality, the National Women's Council of Catalonia urges governments to:

- ensure that the gender equality observatory, as a body of the Catalan Institute of Women and the National Women's Council of Catalonia, is able to monitor indicators linked to the provision of social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure so that equality plans can enhance the sustainable advancement of women in Catalonia;
- ensure that the Catalan Institute of Women and the National Women's Council of Catalonia develop action-oriented recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and Act No. 17/2015 and to support the fulfilment of global commitments with a gender perspective, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- abandon the corrective policies offered by the current framework for public services and sustainable equality infrastructure;
- create egalitarian spaces for dialogue and policies for all women, with particular attention to cases of double or, in many cases triple discrimination, such as disability, ethnicity, administrative status, age, single parenthood, health status, etc.
- mainstream a gender perspective into the statistical data that takes into account the different socioeconomic realities of women and men.

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Statement submitted by Fundacion para Estudio e Investigacion de la Mujer, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing

18-20388 (E) 201218 211218

Please recycle

Statement

[Original: Spanish]

Fundación para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer welcomes the fact that at its sixty-third session the Commission on the Status of Women will consider the issues of social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure because it believes that they are central to the development of public policies to achieve gender equality and the economic empowerment of women and girls. To guarantee sustainable development, States must adopt social protection and health and education systems based on a human rights perspective with a view to achieving gender equality, by means of public policies that recognize and address existing structural differences.

As recognized by the Commission on the Status of Women in its conclusions at its sixty-second session, progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the full realization of their human rights has been held back owing to the persistence of historical and structural unequal power relations between women and men. That is the result of ever greater gaps in access to health and education services, gender-based violence, discriminatory laws and policies, negative social norms, gender stereotypes and the unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work.

In Argentina, as in most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, women are far and away the main figures responsible for unpaid care and domestic work. That unequal distribution of responsibilities is an obstacle that prevents them from moving forward in various areas of life, but especially from joining the paid labour market and enjoying economic opportunities. Inequalities in the household and in labour market participation generate gender gaps in access to social protection. According to the International Labour Organization, worldwide, and particularly with regard to the burden of unpaid work in Argentina, women on average do at least two and a half times more domestic and caregiving work than men, as described in its report entitled "Women at work: Trends 2016". As a result, there are more women than men in informal work, without protection of any kind, including social protection. Although there was progress in Argentina in the form of Act No. 26.844, adopted to ensure greater legal protection for domestic work, the proportion of women domestic workers who are covered by such protection remains low. Although social protection addresses inequalities in employment, the extent to which they can be overcome depends on the structure of each country's social security system, the existence of mechanisms that can compensate for gender inequality in employment and recognition in the social protection system of time spent caring for children or older persons.

In addition, the absence of equal access to health services, particularly among adolescents and girls, leads to a lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services and an increase in teenage pregnancy and especially early pregnancy in girls under 15 years of age, a lack of family planning to space births and the complications of unsafe and clandestine abortions.

With regard to education, while women remain in school longer than boys, even in poorer areas, pregnant girls drop out of school early and become teenage mothers, and have to seek employment at an early age in low-skilled, poorly paid jobs, perpetuating the cycle of poverty for themselves and their children.

That is why we propose:

- The development of programmes to support unpaid care work involving the Government, the private sector and families to ensure care for children up to 5 years of age, older persons, persons with disabilities and the mentally ill.
- The development of social protection policies for all working women, especially those in the informal economy, ensuring that social protection coverage is extended to all forms of employment.
- The promotion of policies to include women in the labour market to ensure a more equitable distribution of care work between men and women, including public policies, technologies and the development of facilities for the provision of care to reduce the burden of unpaid care work for women and families.
- The establishment of juridical and legal frameworks to ensure access to comprehensive and gender-sensitive social protection services, including services providing access to health, education and justice, especially in rural and suburban areas.
- The preparation of time-use surveys, accounting for sex and gender, promoting legal, social and cultural changes such as the extension of paternity and parental leave, greater engagement of men and boys in caregiving, investment in technologies and infrastructure (including water, sanitation and energy infrastructure) to reduce the time spent on domestic work and improvements in the social protection conditions of paid women workers in formal and informal sectors.
- An analysis of the future of work with a gender perspective and the development of policies to ensure equal impact for men and women of such key trends as the gig economy, automation and machine learning. These should be addressed from the perspective of their specific impact in terms of gender, focusing on social protection and the employment rights of women workers, seen as new forms of work that also should provide adequate social protection.
- The inclusion of initiatives to ensure that women in all their diversity and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons benefit from universal and equitable access to gender-responsive, quality health services; and that all people, including rural women and girls, have access to quality medicines and technology that are essential, affordable and effective, as well as to information and services regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights. This must include comprehensive sex education and access to quality sexual health services, including the provision of contraception and safe abortion.
- The assignment of priority to the right to education and placing emphasis on the fact that equal access to inclusive and quality education contributes to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, with a special focus on rural areas, in addition to the promotion of equal participation of women in education and employment in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics.

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Statement submitted by Asociación Nacional Cívica Femenina, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement

[Original: Spanish]

Opening new fronts in old battles: promoting the empowerment of women through social development and labour and cultural structures

Among the many problems affecting gender equality and the development of women today is a failure to create effective policies for real and lasting development to guarantee equal opportunities for men and women. Great efforts have been made, but much remains to be done. Now is not the time to scale back gender equality efforts. On the contrary, we must rethink our approach to the problem by analysing social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The first step is to take a holistic social view that encompasses both the macro and micro perspectives, which are generally tackled separately. Often, public policies devised to address the problem do not reflect an understanding of the cultural and individual variables at play, or have been designed to address public and private problems separately without the understanding that whatever happens in a person's immediate surroundings will affect what that person brings to the public sphere, and that many inequalities and injustices first arise in the individual's private (microsocial) sphere. This is why a people-centred approach to social policy is needed, with an emphasis on social impact. When social policy is people-centred, it highlights the urgent need to return to issues that might seem to be old battles, but are more relevant now than ever before. Hence the importance of creating space to include these persistent problems in the broader discussion about the development of women and gender equality.

Challenge

Lack of policies promoting work-family balance

It is essential to recognize the need to promote the economic empowerment of women in today's changing world of work, including by analysing the challenges and opportunities available to women and by removing obstacles preventing them from fully exercising all of their rights, including economic, social, cultural and political rights. It is also essential to recognize the multidimensional nature of people's lives, and we emphasize that promoting the economic empowerment of women is not possible without also empowering them in their social, family, political and emotional lives.

Men and women are demanding social and labour structures that accommodate working parents and make it easier for employees to work from home, with leave arrangements that allow them to fulfil their family responsibilities without suffering adverse consequences. Improving employment law and work-family balance is a formidable challenge for developing countries where non-existent or deficient labour systems leave a large portion of the population without benefits, entitlements and workers' rights, leading to exploitative conditions and injustice for families. We are living in a world where fathers and mothers do not have social security, paid leave, fixed work schedules, fair pay, pensions or job stability, and yet they bear the responsibility of providing a decent life for their family members.

Adequate conditions for every worker must be ensured, which is why we emphasize the promotion of practices that foster work-family balance and that provide

space for individual development, first and foremost by guaranteeing that breaks, work schedules and leave will be respected.

It is important to recognize that these challenges have become more complex as women have entered the labour market in increasing numbers, leading to an increased awareness of their specific needs, including flexible schedules, accommodations and adjustments to the workload of breastfeeding mothers, the provision of safe childcare facilities during working hours and school schedules that are compatible with parental work schedules.

We must move beyond talk of sanctions, punishments or obligations for labour institutions, focusing instead on truly promoting the dignity of motherhood and fatherhood within organizations. That is why we call for labour policies that include a family perspective and for incentives that encourage businesses to support and protect an environment in which women can be both mothers and professionals in the workplace. It is not a matter of burdening businesses and organizations by imposing difficult and costly conditions. Rather, it is a matter of creating incentives to encourage them to take sustainable actions that support and protect women in family life and at work, in a flexible environment.

Discarding the option of motherhood, judgment and stigmatization

We must recognize that women, throughout the stages of their lives, are affected by violent cultural, social and economic structures in addition to the discrimination and stigmatization that they endure as mothers and the lack of resources for their full and equal participation.

Women should not be pressured or pushed to believe that motherhood is less worthwhile, or that it represents a hardship, an obstacle, a loss of freedom or even a potential threat to life, society or the planet. Certain policies and programmes sustain existing inequalities by creating the impression that motherhood and professional development are contradictory in nature or that professional development requires a postponement of motherhood. They reinforce the message that a professional career is the only true form of achievement.

The stigmatization of motherhood is apparent in the views promoted by some sex education programmes, social policies and actions related to sexual and reproductive health, as well as by the media, that pushes women to fear pregnancy and motherhood, worry that they may regret becoming a mother, reject their bodies, avoid breastfeeding, or hide their pregnancies and leads to structurally violent practices, including the non-hiring of pregnant women or women of childbearing age. We must remember that while policies and the media have the power and responsibility to effect social change, they also have the power to perpetuate violence against and stigmatization of women.

Moreover, many countries lack policies to support pregnant women and mothers, in particular those living in vulnerable conditions, which may include the following: single-parent household; physical or mental health issues affecting the fetus or mother; pregnancy in adolescents or older mothers; pregnancy in a violent environment; and pregnancy resulting from rape. In the absence of programmes that provide social, political, economic, emotional or health care support to continue with the pregnancy, a significant majority of public policies, laws, initiatives and programmes are focused on urging women to terminate pregnancies under the above-mentioned conditions. A lack of opportunity ultimately infringes upon their freedom and development.

The result is that motherhood suffers from constant stigmatization and discrimination.

Recommendations

For the above reasons, we urge Member States to do the following:

- Actively promote policies to improve work-family balance in order to better reconcile their work and family lives and to build labour systems that guarantee the rights of workers
- Promote policies to integrate and reconcile work and family in the public and private spheres
- Reprioritize the rights of workers in the context of the right to freedom of development in order to improve conditions of justice, security and well-being in the workplace
- Urgently address the need for policies that protect pregnant women and mothers in vulnerable situations
- Promote policies that foster a culture of support and protection for fatherhood and motherhood with a gender-sensitive perspective that addresses the specific needs and vulnerability of women and mothers
- Recognize the contribution of motherhood to the current and future development of nations
- Guarantee social support for women in the workplace
- Create the social and political space to facilitate and encourage the participation of women in decision-making processes in public life

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Statement submitted by CHIRAPAQ – Centro de Culturas Indígenas del Perú, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Social protection and access to relevant services for the empowerment of indigenous women and girls in the Americas

Given their comprehensive nature, the Sustainable Development Goals provide a favourable context within which to respond to the needs and requirements of indigenous women and girls in terms of access to public services and social protection. Nonetheless, as far as we are concerned, the major challenge is how to link the broad scope of those goals with the existing international legal framework concerning the rights of indigenous women and peoples, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), General Assembly resolution 69/2 and recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, and of the Cairo+20 and Beijing+20 mechanisms.

In this statement, we shall focus on the relevance of basic services and social protection to indigenous peoples and women and, in particular, challenges regarding access to them in the context of migration to urban centres, and on access to justice, especially for indigenous women rights defenders.

Challenges relating to the relevance of services and social protection to indigenous peoples and women

Among the greatest obstacles we face as indigenous women and girls in gaining access to health care and education are the remoteness and isolation of our communities and the limited knowledge that medical and education professionals have of our languages and cultures. The Permanent Forum, therefore, has always maintained that, under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and General Assembly resolution 69/2, we have the right to participate fully in the development and setting of policies and programmes guaranteeing our right to development.

Although the gaps in access to education and health-care services have shrunk in much of the region, they persist between indigenous and non-indigenous women, largely owing to a lack of quality or culturally relevant services. Figures for maternal health provide a clear example. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, while the national average of maternal deaths among the non-indigenous population of Honduras is 147 deaths per 100,000 live births, that figure rises to as many as 255 in areas more heavily populated by indigenous people.

A study conducted in 2017 by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Centre showed that 69.6 per cent of young indigenous women between 15 and 19 years of age in rural areas of Brazil had completed primary education, compared with 92 per cent of their non-indigenous counterparts. In Peru, data from the National Institute of Statistics and Information Technology highlight that 31.6 per cent of rural indigenous girls aged from 12 to 16 years attending secondary school are behind their age group.

In a similar vein, conditional cash transfer programmes and food assistance often have limited cultural relevance, contribute to the breakdown of the social fabric, lead to an increase in the overall workload for indigenous women and are

distinguished by a lack of shared social responsibility between the authorities and the indigenous women and families themselves. Those issues are evident in the Juntos and Qali Warma programmes in Peru.

Moreover, when we talk about access to health-care services, we indigenous women are not only beneficiaries. We are also providers of physical, emotional and spiritual care in our communities. Nonetheless, government authorities often look askance at the contribution of our ancestral knowledge and practices, as in the case of midwives, and apply Western approaches as the standard for assessing and rejecting all the others.

Social protection and access to services in the context of migration

It is commonly believed that we indigenous women live only in rural areas. In fact, half live in urban areas, often because of forced migration resulting from the impact of the agroindustry, extractive industries, armed conflict, environmental violence, climate change and the very absence of services and opportunities in our territories.

In urban areas, we find ourselves in a hostile, discriminatory and racist environment in which many of us end up in informal employment and completely excluded from access to basic services and social protection.

A high percentage of indigenous women and girls who migrate are employed as domestic workers, an extremely precarious sector in which labour rights are highly susceptible to violation. In Mexico, for example, 90 per cent of all domestic workers are women, among whom the number of indigenous women doubles or even triples that of their non-indigenous counterparts in urban areas.

Access to justice and indigenous women rights defenders

On the subject of access to justice for indigenous women, we are confronted by numerous obstacles arising from the many types of discrimination from which we suffer. They include: cultural, linguistic and economic barriers; the persistent racism and male chauvinism of public officials; the scarce presence of public institutions in remote areas and the disconnect between the mainstream and customary justice systems.

Access to justice is especially limited in cases where indigenous women defenders of human and territorial rights face criminal charges, as they are perceived as a threat to the economic interests and the very sovereignty of States.

We wish to call to mind our sister Juana Raymundo, a young Ixil Mayan rights defender who was assassinated in July. Her body was found with signs of torture, adding to the long list of cases of State impunity.

In view of the foregoing, we urge States and the United Nations system to implement the following recommendations with respect for our right to self-determination, our free, prior and informed consent and our full and effective participation:

- Combat racism and discrimination by training and raising the awareness of public officials, especially in the justice system and education and health-care sectors, and promote the training and inclusion of indigenous women professionals.

- Invest the necessary resources to collect, disaggregate and analyse existing data and use them in the design of truly gender-sensitive and culturally relevant policies and programmes for the provision of services and social protection.
- Promote and support sustainable, rights-based opportunities for job creation and economic development that are relevant to indigenous women living in rural settings and situations of urban migration and in which our knowledge is recognized and social protection mechanisms are ensured.
- Conduct studies focusing on the social, economic and cultural impact of conditional cash transfer programmes on the lives of indigenous women and girls.
- Design and implement comprehensive policies to protect defenders of human and territorial rights, including specific measures for indigenous women rights defenders.
- Promote the establishment of specific State institutions for indigenous women and girls that are representative and responsive to our realities and needs and sufficiently well funded from budget resources to ensure their effectiveness.

The full empowerment of indigenous women and girls will be possible only to the extent that States come to view public services and social protection as fundamental rights rather than favours done to beneficiaries.

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Statement submitted by Association Nationale Al Hidn, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

18-20736 (E) 181218

Please recycle

Statement

The Association Nationale Al Hidn, a Moroccan association in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council that works in the areas of women's development, child protection and family support, welcomes the holding by the Commission on the Status of Women of its sixty-third session. It appreciates the Commission's choice of theme for the session, "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls", and reaffirms the importance of social protection as a fundamental human right that guarantees human dignity and as a tool for social justice, empowerment and tackling poverty and inequality.

The Association would like to stress that social protection, gender equality and access to social and public services are closely linked to one another.

Social protection, as defined by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, consists of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability and to strengthen people's economic and social resilience. The economic and social empowerment of women should be considered an essential element of social protection. There is, therefore, a need to establish or strengthen inclusive and gender-sensitive social protection systems with programmes and policies that take into account the needs and priorities of women, given their diverse roles both inside and outside the family.

The Association Nationale Al Hidn also advocates investing more in social programmes and policies, extending their scope beyond the limits of mere safety nets and help tools, focusing on the need to facilitate access by women to such services, and strengthening family-focused social protection systems in general.

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Statement submitted by the Working Women Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present annex is being issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

The Working Women Association

The Working Women Association is a Sudanese civil society organization that aims at professional and intellectual development and economic empowerment for working women. Its members include some 350,000 women workers in the public and private sectors, who make up 67 per cent of Government sector workers and 80 per cent of education sector workers.

The Association has contributed to numerous projects on social protection, access to public services, empowerment of working women and gender equality.

The Association has launched a number of programmes to enhance health and reproductive services, foster a healthy community and realize sustainable development, including the following:

"Health revolution" programmes

The Association has implemented a "midwife for every village" project as part of its overall maternal and child health strategy and plans. In March 2008, the first forum for women health sector workers was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Health under the slogan "reducing maternal mortality before, during and after childbirth". Several papers were presented, including a paper on the role of women doctors in sustainable development. Some 250 midwives graduated.

The Association began training midwives in response to the high maternal mortality rate, which, according to a 1999 survey, stood at 509 deaths per 100,000 births. As 85 per cent of births are attended by midwives, it was clear that there was a need for skill upgrades and an improvement in standards for services for normal pregnancies (without complications), obstetrics, postnatal care, newborn care, and diagnosis of abnormal and emergency situations involving mothers and newborns during pregnancy, delivery and the post-partum period, and referral to hospitals for the necessary care.

The primary health care project

This project was a response to an increase in malaria cases, which was attributable to inadequate services for large numbers of rural citizens, lack of clean water in certain areas, malnutrition, the spread of disease and poor health education. The project aims to improve the environment, raise awareness of proper nutrition, immunize children against diseases, treat patients, provide essential medications and offer health education to citizens.

The reproductive health project

This project focuses on the full physical, mental and social well-being of individuals when it comes to reproductive and gynaecological matters. The programme raises awareness of the importance of health care before marriage and works to counter harmful customs (such as female genital cutting), combat sexually transmitted diseases, diagnose infertility and identify its causes, and provide family planning services and health care to young adults and adolescents.

The maternal safety project

This project was a response to high maternal mortality rates and high neonatal mortality rates. The project recognizes the importance of proper nutrition for pregnant women, anti-smoking campaigns, tetanus vaccinations, periodic medical check-ups,

adequate post-partum rest, breastfeeding (particularly for newborns) and post-partum health check-ups.

The project seeks to promote the use of technology, particularly information and communications technology, to empower working women.

Information technology is a broad area that includes handling and management of information with computer software, particularly in large organizations, so that it can be converted, stored, protected, managed, transferred and retrieved as necessary.

The concept of empowerment involves changing power relations and providing opportunities for individuals to take the initiative, make decisions and gain more control over their lives. It also means that social, economic and political systems must give up some authority in order to allow individuals and marginalized groups to participate in decision-making and play an effective role in society.

Information and communications technology greatly helps to disseminate information that can promote women's economic opportunities, especially for working women. Smartphones, for example, can be used to access information that can be widely utilized.

The Association has worked to empower women through a project to increase ownership of electronic devices and computers, disseminate digital literacy, and inform women of the benefits of electronic payments, thereby advancing the State's e-government plans.

With respect to access to public services and sustainable infrastructure in the service of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the Association has sponsored the following projects throughout the Sudan:

- The Association has signed memorandums of understanding with the Savings Bank and Workers' Microfinance Company to finance individual and collective manufacturing projects for working women. A total of 15,485 manufacturing projects have received 15,992,477 pounds, and the project is still underway.
- The Association signed a memorandum of understanding with the Workers' Microfinance Company to train working women in household agriculture, utilizing household space for the cultivation of safe, chemical-free food. It also takes advantage of unused space in schools for vegetable cultivation.
- The Association has offered baking courses in partnership with Sayga Food Industries Company for 39,323 working women.
- The Association's food industry courses have trained some 1,500 working women how to prepare various dishes by replacing meat with vegetables.
- The Association organized several recycling training sessions, showing how to reduce waste and make efficient use of discarded items.
- Through the Economic Secretariat, the Association created charity markets to provide consumer goods at official, subsidized prices with the aim of lessening economic burdens.
- The Economic Secretariat oversees Eid fairs at various branches.
- The Economic Secretariat, in cooperation with municipalities in Khartoum State and federal branches, has opened retail outlets for sale of merchandise at wholesale prices. That was made possible through agreements with factories and companies to sell their products directly to working women at their places of work.

- The Secretariat has followed up the implementation of a presidential directive regarding oversight of workplace food conglomerates to ensure reasonable prices for workers.
- The Association has held forums for women in various occupational sectors. Professional development recommendations were put forward by the Health Forum (which recommended a health campaign), the Agricultural Forum and the Economic Forum. Forums were also held for women working in the informal sector with the goal of integrating them into the development process and protecting their rights. Women working in the informal sector were also included in the Association's memorandums on microfinance activities.
- The Association has launched projects for the purchase of goods, such as electrical appliances and household furniture, in instalments, saving time and effort for working women. The Secretariat provided gas canisters at official prices through various companies. The Association also holds annual sales of school uniforms and backpacks for workers' children. It is working to transfer ownership of the means of production, and has been able to transfer ownership of 10,781 productive projects.
- The Association has provided children's meals to kindergartens, which have been approved by the Sudanese Standards and Metrology Organization, to ensure adequate nutrition for women workers' children in nursery schools, and has prepared breakfasts for elementary school students.
- The Association promotes social solidarity by supporting various convoys: annual winter clothing convoys to remote areas; convoys to mitigate the adverse impacts of torrential rains and floods in the various states of the Sudan; annual school support convoys; and convoys to facilitate voluntary return to states, which provide food and cooking devices.
- The Secretariat has published pamphlets on health, religious and legal matters.
- The Association has made an effective contribution to providing Ramadan packages free of charge to workers from vulnerable groups, and at reasonable cost in most other cases.
- It has contributed to social networking programmes at various events for women civil service pensioners by providing material and in-kind support.
- The Association, in partnership with the Ministry of the Interior, has participated in 77 lectures on addiction treatment and the dangers of narcotics.
- Women civil service pensioners have been provided with material support.
- There is a support and relief project for displaced families in South Kordofan State.
- There are disaster prevention and environment improvement projects in various states.
- There is a textbook project in South Kordofan State.
- There is a clothing distribution project for displaced women in the relevant states.
- There have been convoys sent to South Kordofan State for the voluntary return programmes.
- Educational platforms have been organized where specialists address issues of the day from an analytical perspective, including issues such as migrant workers, changing the Sudan's time zone, and a Charter for the Muslim Family.

- The Secretariat has conducted awareness campaigns, with training sessions, on regular breast examinations and referral of cases to treatment centres. This programme takes place in October each year.

- The Secretariat, in an effort to foster the development of women workers, has launched free training internships. It has also sent them on training trips in Turkey, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and to two free training sessions in China on combating poverty (Goal 1 of the Sustainable Development Goals) as part of the Association's goal of fostering international connections and skill acquisition.

- The Association attaches importance to legislation and human rights, educating working women on labour law and the status and rights of women according to international conventions. This is in order to empower working women, make them aware of their legal rights and allow them to play a role in social and economic change through equal opportunity, removal of obstacles and the possibility of decent work. To that end, the Secretariat held workshops on the Insurance and Pensions Act, the practice and application of women's rights in labour law, the status of women in international conventions ratified by the Sudan and their state of implementation, and labour law and civil service regulations. In addition, the Association's Legal Counsel provides free legal advice.

Recommendations for empowering women and girls

- Creation and enhancement of partnerships among civil society organizations, regionally and internationally, in order to create opportunities for knowledge transfer and to secure funding for programmes and activities related to the development and empowerment of women and girls.

- Raising awareness among women of laws and international instruments and urging the international community to raise awareness of the importance of ratifying instruments on the empowerment of women and girls.

- Studying the experiences of civil society organizations working to empower women and girls.

- Encouraging women and girls to become involved in development and economic programmes.

The Working Women Association thanks the United Nations and the Commission on the Status of Women for their support of civil society organizations concerned with the empowerment of women in accordance with the international conventions that protect their rights. We also thank the Commission on the Status of Women for organizing events in support of women that have given rise to fruitful exchanges of experiences.

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Statement submitted by Sudanese Women General Union, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

The Sudanese Women General Union is a non-governmental voluntary organization that works to empower women economically, socially and politically through the activities and projects which it implements at its 27,000 branches located throughout the Sudan. The Union seeks to establish a society in which justice and equality are achieved in order to ensure the rights of women and children. To this end, it develops strategies, policies, plans and programmes to strengthen and promote the role of women. The Union has set up a database on the condition of women, and has also prepared a review of national, regional and international commitments on women's empowerment. It has worked to establish networks of non-governmental organizations and put in place capacity-building programmes to promote and protect women's constitutional rights, advance the well-being of women and children, reduce their mortality rates, and increase women's awareness of sexually transmitted diseases and how to protect against them. It also promotes participation in peacebuilding, the dissemination of a culture of peace, and the eradication of illiteracy, including digital illiteracy. The Union was granted consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations in 2007.

The Union has launched a number of initiatives in the area of economic empowerment of women, particularly in rural areas. They include the Women's Portfolio Project for microfinance, which was followed by a programme for soft loans and an innovation prize for rural women. All these projects have contributed to reducing poverty among women and raising their standard of living. Then came the initiative to establish the Amal Women's Microfinance Foundation with a view to reinforcing previous initiatives and uniting efforts. It was established in partnership with the Central Bank of Sudan and the Ministry of Welfare and Social Security. Branches were opened in nine of Sudan's states, and in 2014, the Foundation helped 2,894 individuals to access microcredit, of whom only 1.4 per cent defaulted on their payments. The Union has to deal with many challenges during its efforts to train women on how to run successful projects, as it receives no support from the international community in this area of its work.

With regard to its social work, the Union has set up 110 development centres across the Sudan, which work to deliver comprehensive social, health and educational services, and also offer family counselling, with a view to teaching families about justice, gender equality, inheritance rights and the health risks of female genital mutilation and early marriage. The Union has also set up children's education centres within these development centres, to which it supplies teaching aids and kindergarten services.

The Union is also an active member of the national commission for displaced persons. It campaigns to raise awareness of the issue and to protect displaced persons, and it works to reunite people with their families. The Union also works to provide health care to elderly persons and to improve their living environments, as well as to raise service providers' awareness of the need to improve the level of care given to elderly individuals. It also supports a number of care centres for disabled persons, and it helps to provide disabled persons with health and education services and with various subsidies. However, providing continuous, wide-spread, qualitative service is an ongoing challenge.

The Union has run a number of health projects, the most prominent of which was a project to ensure that every village had a midwife, although it was unable to cover all the regions in need. As part of its project to provide comprehensive health coverage in the Sudan, it formed 7,000 community networks to expand health services, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups (women and children). The

Union has taken the lead among Sudanese civil society organizations in the global movement to promote nutrition and eliminate malnutrition among children and pregnant or lactating women, as well as the push to end hunger and improve food security. It has also been instrumental in increasing midwife coverage to 95 per cent for grass-roots communities, with a view to decreasing maternal and newborn mortality. It has also taken the lead in campaigns for the early detection of breast and cervical cancer.

Lastly, the Union calls for increased support for projects and for increased training of organization personnel.

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Statement submitted by New Japan Women's Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Statement

Since its foundation in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association (NJWA), with its 130,000 members all over Japan, has been working for the abolition of nuclear weapons, rights of women and children, and solidarity of women around the world for peace.

Reduction of Social Security Spending Increasing Disparities and Poverty

In Japan, women's poverty has become a major social issue, and the situation is particularly grave among children, single-female-parent families, and elderly women.

In order to assist those children who are not able to eat sufficiently or have to eat alone, women's organizations like the New Japan Women's Association, civil society groups and volunteers have set up more than 2,000 "Children's Cafeterias" throughout Japan. Behind this is the reality that the poverty rate for single-mother families exceeds 50 percent.

Sixty percent of working women in Japan work in non-regular jobs, women's wage is half of men's, and almost half of them earn less than 2 million yen (17,770 in US dollars) a year. The male-female pay gap results in their pension gap. Without a guaranteed minimum pension system in place, poverty is a critical issue for elderly women. Cuts in pension and welfare benefits, coupled with the raise in health and nursing-care insurances premiums and charges for services weigh heavy on the elderly, leaving 54 percent of older women living alone in poverty. Low wages and low pensions prevent women from becoming economically independent. On the other hand, big corporations with more than 1 billion yen (8.82 million in US dollars) in capital increased their internal reserves to a record 425.8 trillion yen (3.78 trillion in US dollars), and we are calling on these corporations to fulfil their social responsibility by using their huge profits to raise wages of workers.

Background to the rise in poverty and widening income gap is the fact that neoliberal "structural reforms" have been carried out, with deregulation and privatization being promoted in the name of "more efficiency" and "necessary services at one's own expenses", which has resulted in reduced social services including childcare, nursing care and medical care programs. The burden of childrearing and nursing care is more and more imposed upon the family, particularly women, and there has been a rapid increase in the number of those leaving their jobs because they have to take care of their sick or elder family members. As social security is the right of the people recognized by the Constitution, we are calling on the government to improve social services on its own instead of shifting the responsibility to the individuals.

The New Japan Women's Association members all over Japan send requests to Diet members, asking them to oppose the bills for adversely revising the social security system every time such bills are submitted to the Diet. They also bring the actual conditions of those engaged in nursing care, medical care and child care, together with urgent desires of those using or in need of these services to local municipalities and government, calling for better services.

Life Is the First Priority: Money for Disaster Prevention, Air Conditioning for Schools, and Welfare

In summer 2018, Japan hit the record-high temperature amid severe heat wave, as declared "natural disaster" by the weather agency. In classrooms, most of which lack air conditioners, children's health was at great risk. Apart from the heat wave, Japan experienced multiple disasters, enduring weeks of unanticipated and

unprecedented torrential rains, typhoons and earthquakes, which caused immense damage to people's living and local economy of the affected areas. With such messages as "Life Is the First Priority" and "Protect Children", the New Japan Women's Association throughout the country requested municipalities to install air conditioners in classrooms as well as to review the disaster prevention measures. The Association also petitioned the Education Ministry calling on the State to take responsibility to deal with the situation and succeeded in having the government to allocate a supplementary budget of 935.6 billion yen (8.75 million in US dollars) to assist municipalities to equip classrooms with air-conditioning.

Since 1980, the New Japan Women's Association has carried on the movement demanding, "Cut Military Spend and Use the Money for Better Living, Welfare and Education". Now that more and more countries are signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons adopted by the United Nations in July 2017 towards its ratification, and that a positive change is taking place in the Korean Peninsula with efforts are being made to realize peace through dialogues, the Association is committed to strengthen the movement more than ever.

For a Society without Sexual Harassment, Women Take Actions

As #MeToo movement spread worldwide, women in Japan, too, protested with anger against sexual harassment and sexist words and deeds of politicians and bureaucrats, and against the recent revelation that one of the top medical universities had discriminated female applicants in entrance exams and that multiple institutions had done the same. Women are standing up to take actions for transforming the society into one without sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination.

Japan dropped to a record-low of 114th among the 144 countries in the Global Gender Gap for 2017, remaining at the bottom of the developed nations. The major cause for this is the under-representation of women in politics and their low economic status due to the unshrinking gender pay gap and the small number of women in management positions. It is in this context that more and more women start unleashing their long pent-up rage and frustration.

The New Japan Women's Association released urgent proposals for "Creating a Society without Sexual Harassment", calling on the entire society to share the recognition that sexual harassment constitutes a grave human right's violation, and to build a consensus on its elimination including through legislation to prohibit sexual harassment and training. The Association members at local level are bringing the proposals to municipal authorities and local governments to have talks with them. Our activities on the ground include visits to convenience stores in each community with requests to stop selling pornographic magazines, in which women are solely sexualized. A local chain and some stores have responded by suspending the sales of such magazines.

Women's empowerment and gender equality are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the common challenge for the international community. The New Japan Women's Association will continue acting calling for the promotion of social security and services to guarantee decent lives and work for all, with the primary responsibility taken by the State; for reviewing "neoliberal" economic policies, which have widened inequality and poverty, from gender and human rights perspectives; and for moving the money from military spending to investment in people's lives and living.

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Statement submitted by Family Educational Services Foundation, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

In accordance with the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the priority theme, "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" and the review theme, "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development" (as agreed conclus[illegible]s of the 60th session) carry significant meaning for development driven civil society in Pakistan. Three years after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and one year before the 25-year review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Family Education Services Foundation (FESF) recognizes positive steps taken by Pakistan in the inclusion of women within the development framework and narrative as civil society and government continue to engage in dialogue and work on issue-specific projects.

Civil society and the government of Pakistan recognize the right to social security as enshrined in several human rights instruments (including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979; the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1965; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (1990); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006) as they parallel the obligations of basic human rights as mandated in the Constitution of Pakistan.

We urge the United Nations Member States to recognize that as an investment, social protection functions as a key instrument in reducing poverty and enhancing growth in terms of pro-growth enhancing effect (creating asset creations like public works, schools programs, etc.). Social protection also has income and employment multiplier effects that ultimately lead to growth; a poverty-reducing effect which directly raise the income and consumption of the poor by lifting them out of poverty through redistributive transfers; and equity-promoting effects addressing redress power differentials between individuals and groups to encourage inclusive economic growth (such as appropriate minimum wages, land access for women, etc.).

In furthering this work, Family Education Services Foundation has opened a new Deaf Reach School in Sukkur, Pakistan to help provide comprehensive educational opportunities to even more students. The American Pakistan Foundation (APF), our United Nations collaborative partners, has the APF Fellows Program to allow Pakistani and other Americans to support the rural development of Pakistan by working with the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP). National Rural Support Programme works with over two million rural households, 150,000 community organizations, and 500 local support organizations in Azad Kashmir, Punjab, Sindh, and Baluchistan.

We emphasize to the United Nations Member States that social development concerns of inequality, exclusion, unemployment, and low productivity remain challenges within the economies of countries like Pakistan.

We urge the Member States, in agreeance with the Agreed Conclusions of Commission on Status of Women 60, to focus on promoting and respecting the right of girls and boys to education throughout their life cycle, especially those who are the most marginalized, by providing access to quality education, to ensure inclusive, equal and non-discriminatory quality education, promote learning opportunities for all, ensure completion of primary and secondary education, to eliminate gender

disparities in access to all areas of education, to promote financial literacy, and equal access for individuals with disabilities at all levels of education and training.

We acknowledge the civil society work on the ground to ensure quality education and social protections for Pakistan's most vulnerable segments of society. In September 2018 Family Education Services Foundation received the World Innovation Summit for Education Award in New York City for its innovative strategies to address education challenges, positive contribution and potential for scalability and adaptability while pioneering disability projects that help bring real change to societies and communities through its growing resource of expertise and sound educational practice. Family Education Services Foundation, impacting more than 50,000 vulnerable children across Pakistan, believes in utilizing Agenda 2030 and the World Summit on Information Society framework to leverage information communication technologies to overcome critical lack of quality education for marginalized children in Pakistan by harnessing digital technologies to transform education and offer unprecedented access to resources for language and learning development.

We urge the United Nations Member States to recognize the need to engage men and boys, including community leaders, as strategic partners and allies in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. They need to be engaged in order to help eliminate of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, design and implement national policies and programmes that address internationally agreed development goals towards social protection systems and provide access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

As the 5th largest global population with 63 per cent under the age of 30 and as the 2nd largest youth market, Pakistan has civil society and government commitments to ensure gender inclusion in the workforce, training and decision making. In this continued spirit, we call on the United Nations Member State of Pakistan to continue to strengthen partnerships with stakeholders in areas of the private sector, academia, and civil society. Serving as a catalyst to change and a conduit of introducing the Global Goals to partner non-governmental organisations on the ground in Pakistan, the American Pakistan Foundation spearheaded the Emerging Leaders Conference in Houston, Texas. Creating a historic partnership platform for emerging leaders and youth with a focus on the empowerment of youth and young professionals, civil society engagement, and development by mobilizing collective knowledge, resources, and influence of Pakistani Americans, and friends of Pakistan, to advance socio-economic development in Pakistan at scale.

We call on member states to recognize the urgency of reviewing the challenges of ensuring social protection, public services and infrastructure for poverty eradication and progress for women and girls as outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 while acknowledging Pakistan's commitment to creating "social security systems wherever they do not exist, or review them with a view of placing individual women and men on an equal footing, at every stage of their lives." However, we emphasize that Pakistan's social protection focuses on an economic approach instead of reviewing the discrimination and marginalization narrative. These include the Pakistan Bait-ul Maal, the institution of zakat (charitable donations), the Workers Welfare Fund, Employees Social Security Institutions, the Workers Participation Fund, various provincial wheat subsidy programs, and the Khushali Bank and these policies emphasize targeted schemes rather than viewing poverty and risk. Therefore, a holistic conceptualization of social protections must be advocated.

We urge UN Member States to mainstream social protection within its national agendas and include the following parameters within the framework and approaches to social protection: (i) a clear articulated social protection strategy; (ii) adequate government spending on existing social safety nets; (iii) committed funding for safety net programs; (iv) adequate current assistance; (v) multiple programs in core competence activities; (vi) adequate targeting mechanisms and weak governance; (vii) inter-agency coordination; and (vii) strong monitoring and supervision.

We urge member states to create a multi-stakeholder platform where private sector can play a greater role in the provision of social protection, both through private philanthropy and by utilizing the non-profit sector as a delivery mechanism for social services as well as income-generating schemes with a multi-dimensional conceptualization of social protection as part of citizenship rights and not entirely dependent on private and market-based provisioning. Agenda 2030 provides a framework across the 17 development goals to re-visit and institute substantive plans for ensuring social protections through partnerships.

Family Education Services Foundation (FESF) urges Pakistan and other United Nations member states to continue their leadership role in the further implementation of gender-based policies that encourage and support women's empowerment. Especially in rural areas and within the most vulnerable segments of society, and their link to sustainable development.

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Statement submitted by Grameen Development & Poverty Alleviation Sangstha (GDPAS), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

Advancement of Women

A large number of women of Bangladesh are helpless, for the reason: some of the women are divorced by their husbands, some of the women are considered as dowry. Those women are living under poverty and hand to mouth in Bangladesh, deprived from all humanitarian right like health, education, financial facilities, decision-making, right in marital status, legal right of ancestral poverty etc. Due to illiteracy, they are also the victims of cruelty by the male. They are to face divorce by their husband for giving birth to female children and education facilities are still beyond their reach. Environmental problems are yet another main problem of our country.

Grameen Development & Poverty Alleviation Sangstha (GDPAS) is affiliated with Women Affairs Directorate of Bangladesh. Presently, we are working with maternity mother and vulnerable women for their awareness build up as well as with mother care and income generating activities (IGA) of the women.

Maternity Stipend Program for Women

With the support of Ministry of Women and Child Affairs GDPAS has implemented "Maternal Stipend Program" in Muladi and Barisal Sadar. A total of 1122 lactating mothers has receiving support from the project. The project has provided Capacity building training, awareness raising education on breastfeeding, supplementary food and income generating activities. The organization has organized Group Meeting, training, advocacy regarding these issues.

Pre-Primary Education Program for Women

Since 2012 GDPAS has been implementing "Pre-Primary Education" with the technical assistance by the BRAC. Under this project Organization provided education to 200 pre-school aged students through five established centers. Among the five centers, two were established in Agailjahara Upzila and other three were Gaurnadi Upazila under the Barisal District. GDPAS has experience in working on large scale of pre-Primary school activities.

Reduction of Hazardous Women and Child Education Project

With the support of the ministry of Labor and employment, GDPAS Organization implemented this activity from 2005 to 2008. Under this activity, 450 under privilege children received primary education and six month's skill development training.500 Girls received education through 15 Education centres.

Maternity Stipend Program

With the support of Ministry of Women and Child Affairs GDPAS has implemented "Maternal Stipend Program" in Muladi Upazila and Barisal Sadar Upazila. A total of 1122 lactating mothers has receiving support from the project. The project has provided Capacity building training, awareness raising education on breastfeeding, supplementary food, and income generating activities. The organization has organized Group Meeting, training, advocacy and regarding these issues.

Reduction of Hazardous Child Education Project

With the support of the ministry of Labour and employment; GDPAS Organization has implement this activity since 2005 to 2008. Under this activity 450 under privilege children were learned primary education and six-month skill development training.265 Girls and 185 boys are received education through 15 Education centres.

Capacity Building Training Program

GDPAS organization has provided Human development, organizational development and skill development training to their beneficiaries so that they can contribute in development and formed community-based organization. Under this activities A total of 4630 beneficiaries have received training in various trade/subject. Among them 62 per cent women and 38 males are graduated with various skill and knowledge development training in Water Sanitation and Health promotion, Health Awareness and Capacity building and Management training respectively.

- Capacity building
- Education and training of women
- Human rights of women
- Empowerment of women
- Millennium Development Goals
- Policy advice to Women
- Service provision
- Trafficking in women and girls
- Violence against women
- Women and HIV/AIDS
- Women and health
- Women and poverty
- Women and the economy
- Women and the environment
- Women and the media
- Women in power and decision-making

Training for Mother Health Awareness Development

GDPAS has been operating Poor Mother Maternity Training Program with the support by Directorate of Women Affairs. GDPAS has had been operating 5 years programs for Barisal district with support from small NGO fund of Bangladesh Government. The advocacy program and lobbying to upazila level Poor Mother Maternity Training Program by Directorate of Women Affairs of upazila administration and District Deputy Commissioner's Office to take proper action to needed for women awareness build up training. Holding gathering, seminars and workshops on women awareness build up training and ask the local government authorities to represent and present their opinion for women health care of maternity mother. Bangladesh is one of the 160 countries which signed their commitments to the said world convention.

While the Government feels that these provisions conflict with religious Islamic laws, women feel these reservations infringe upon the protection and promotion of their rights. The unequal treatment of women in Bangladesh sanctioned by the constitution reflects gender-based discrimination in mainstream society. In marriages and separations, for example, women's right of choice is governed by the personal laws that give more importance to social obligation than personal choice.